



Report to Council

Department: Development Services
Division: Planning
Date: March 21, 2022
Prepared by: Corinne Chiasson, Assistant Planner
Report Number: Planning-2022-03
Subject: County Road 50 West CWATS Paved Shoulders – Finance Model and Federal Active Transportation Funding Application
Number of Pages: 10

Recommendation(s)

That Planning-2022-03 Report entitled County Road 50 West County-Wide Active Transportation System (“CWATS”) Paved Shoulders – Finance Model and Federal Active Transportation Funding Application prepared by Corinne Chiasson, dated March 21, 2022 be received;

That Council pre-approve the multi-year Capital Project for the completion of County Road 50 West Paved Shoulders with a total cost of \$2,268,444, in partnership with the County of Essex, to be funded from 2023 through to 2026 by a total operating contribution of \$375,000 and a total grant funding allocation of \$1,893,444; and

That Council support administration applying and partnering with the County of Essex for the Federal Active Transportation Fund, through Infrastructure Canada, for the construction of paved shoulders along County Road 50 West between County Road 41, and Dahinda Drive.

Purpose

On January 24, 2022 administration received Council's endorsement to set aside reserve funds in the Capital Works Budget, and to prepare a finance funding model for the installation of bike lanes and paved shoulders for County Road 50 West.

Administration is now seeking support for the finance funding model, and to advise Council of the Town of Essex's application to the Federal Active Transportation Fund. Administration is intending to align this project with the County of Essex County Road 50 West Road rehabilitation, scheduled to start in 2023.

Background and Discussion

County Road 50 West located along the southern portion of the Town of Essex, is an East-West connecting link along the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail and is also identified as a main arterial route in the County Wide Active Transportation Master Plan (2012). This route travels through historic settlements, prime farmland, and connects community hubs starting from Amherstburg, to Colchester and Harrow, and then continues to Kingsville. For these reasons, County Road 50 was identified as a priority route to be upgraded with bike lanes on paved shoulders for the "County Wide Active Transportation System (CWATS)" see Figure 1.



Figure 1. CWATS Master Plan Stakeholder Review

CWATS is a comprehensive network of active transportation corridors that circle the shorelines of Lake St. Clair, Detroit River and Lake Erie, and criss-crosses the County connecting communities, employment sectors, bringing tourism to our region. The Town of Essex component of this route contains great historic and scenic vistas along Lake Erie, that include pioneer settlements, rural farmsteads (some dating to the War of

1812), historic Black Settlements along the Underground Railroad to freedom, and Empire Loyalist communities that resettled during the American Revolution. This important route links rural residential and cottage neighbourhoods to public amenities, areas of natural significance, and community hubs like churches, schools and parks. Tourist oriented businesses abound in this area from renown estate wineries, breweries, historic bed and breakfasts, and short-term rentals which allow visitors to absorb the sunny shores and rich culture at Canada's southern most coast. Cycling tourism and active transportation are also featured elements supporting our Agri-tourism Development Strategy. This strategy promotes connecting the community and visitors to: sustainable on-farm experiences, accommodations, culinary tourism, and local businesses that feature locally sourced products. The unique character of a community is at the heart of a visitor's experience, and strategies such as active transportation, agri-tourism, cultural and natural heritage networks, are critical links to these important Town of Essex assets.

County Road 50 West - Paved Shoulders and Road Rehabilitation

This long-anticipated project will increase community connectivity, but most importantly improve safety and mobility for our citizens, cyclists, motorists and visitors to our region.

The project will include the construction of 5.7 kms of paved shoulders (1.5 metres added to both the westbound and eastbound lanes), safety pavement markings, and wayfinding signage, (see Figure 2).

Paved Shoulder



Figure 2 – Typical paved shoulders, CWATS Master Plan 2012

Rest stops and benches will be incorporated at appropriate locations for comfort and to promote the Town's numerous attractions and amenities along the route. These works will be constructed within the existing road right of way owned by the County of Essex and will utilize existing drainage corridors. The timing of this proposal aligns well with the County of Essex scheduled road rehabilitation of County Road 50 West, which will result in cost savings for both the Town of Essex and the County of Essex if completed in a coordinated fashion. Additional costs aside from the road rehabilitation and paved shoulders may include relocating utility poles and private mailboxes.

We have experienced great expansion in our regional tourism and local user traffic along our active transportation corridors, especially because of the global pandemic and rising fuel costs. Our Climate Adaptation Plan "Climate Ready" identifies the need to support and expand active transportation systems to reduce our carbon footprint and incorporate healthy living opportunities to enhance citizens quality of life and community connectivity.

Strong public support is acknowledged for this project for improvements to safety measures especially for youths, families, seniors, migrant farm workers and our local cycling communities. Town of Essex Council, County Council, and our municipal

partners have all championed further expansion of this network and have offered great positive support for the updates being undertaken on the CWATS Master Plan review process.

Successful application to the Federal Active Transportation Fund would help the Town of Essex and County of Essex achieve goals and objectives identified in the: CWATS Master Plan, the National Active Transportation Strategy, action items in our Climate Adaptation Plan, and support sustainability policies in the Town of Essex Official Plan. This active transportation project also supports and plans for increased housing development forecasted along the southside of County Road 50 West, while providing opportunities for Agri-tourism on the rural north side of County Road 50 West.

Federal Active Transportation Fund

The Federal Active Transportation Fund, set up through Infrastructure Canada, is a new \$400 million dollar fund, provided over 5 years, that supports communities to build vibrant connected neighbourhoods through active transportation linkages such as new and expanded networks of pathways, bike lanes, trails, and pedestrian bridges, as well as supporting active transportation planning and stakeholder engagement activities. This is the first time that a Federal Fund has been set up specifically for building active transportation systems in Canada. The intention is to support a modal shift away from cars, and toward active transportation, in support of Canada's National Active Transportation Strategy. The fund is now open to accepting application submissions from across Canada, and municipalities with eligible projects are encouraged to apply before March 31, 2022.

Successful project applications need to demonstrate improved community connectivity, accessibility, economic benefits, environmental and climate benefits, improved user mobility and support a safe and secure environment. These components are outlined in Figure 3 below and explain how projects are to enhance the viability of the Federal Active Transportation Strategy.

Application Development

Merit Criteria: Capital Project Funding Stream

Improved Community Connectivity and Accessibility	Project strategically improves active transportation connectivity by expanding the network and/or increasing connections between destinations			
	Project enhances accessibility to active transportation within the community, particularly for vulnerable, underserved, higher needs, or other populations			
Economic Benefits	Project provides economic value to the community through increased:			
	Employment opportunities in construction and supply chain	Tourism	Active transportation access to business districts	
Environmental and Climate Benefits	Project results in environmental benefits, such as:			
	GHG Reductions	Land Use Intensification	Protection of Green Spaces	Use of Green Technologies
Improved User Mobility and Support of a Safe and Secure Environment	Project addresses safety and/or security issues for active transportation in the community			
	Project contains measures to ensure a safe and a secure environment, including for vulnerable populations			
Viability	Project is part of an active transportation strategy	Project has significant community support	Planning work is in an advanced state (e.g., design, permits, securing matching funds)	

Figure 3. National Active Transportation Application Guideline Document.

The Town of Essex is collaborating with the County of Essex on this capital project in hopes of successfully securing 60% of the funding through the Federal AT Fund. The County of Essex is working with the Town of Essex on a timetable for the proposed project. Confirmation has been provided that works will be undertaken along with their road rehabilitation schedule starting in 2023 and continuing through 2024 and 2025 if necessary. The funding model provided below is based on the project spanning 3 years and **is not based** on successful achievement of the Federal Active Transportation Fund. If the Town is however successful in the grant application, the Town of Essex portion of the funding model will be reduced accordingly. Town of Essex administration has worked cooperatively with the County of Essex finance department to create this funding model to benefit both parties.

Financial Impact

Town administration has received cost estimates from the County of Essex for this partnered project, as listed in the below chart. As this project falls outside of the annual budgeting process and is spanning multiple years, Council approval is required.

The below chart depicts the total project cost for the Trails portion, applicable to the Town, and the proposed funding (assuming the Town is not awarded the Federal Active Transportation Grant). Should the Town be the eligible recipient of the Federal Active Transportation grant, these monies would be used to reduce the allocations of either the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) or Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF), previously Gas Tax Fund, grant streams referenced below.

Total Project Cost (\$3,780,740 at Town's 60% Cost =)		\$2,268,444
Year	Funding Source	Amount
2022	Operating	\$75,000
	Grant Monies (OCIF)	\$500,000
2023- Construction Begins	Operating	\$75,000
	Grant Monies (OCIF/CCBF)	\$348,361
2024	Operating	\$75,000
	Grant Monies (OCIF/CCBF)	\$348,361
2025- Project Finalization	Operating	\$75,000
	Grant Monies (OCIF/CCBF)	\$348,361
2026	Operating	\$75,000
	Grant Monies (OCIF/CCBF)	\$348,361
Total Proposed Funding	Operating	\$375,000
	Grant (OCIF/CCBF)	\$1,893,444
	TOTAL	\$2,268,444

It is important to note that these funding models do pose the potential to change, which would be done so by Administration through the annual budgeting process, or additional reports to Council if necessary. This is due to the uncertainty surrounding the annual allocation of grants. It is important to note that while the allocations are unknown, these grants have been awarded to the Town annually with increases. Allocations for 2023 are known for CCBF (previously Gas Tax), but OCIF is done on an annual basis. In aggregate since 2012 the town has received a minimum of \$900,000 annually.

Consultations

Kate Giurissevich, Director, Corporate Services

Lori Chadwick, Director, Development Services

Rita Jabbour, Manager, Planning Services

Jeff Watson, Planner, Development Services

Marc Tortola, Manager, Strategic Communications

Nelson Silveira, Economic Development Officer, Development Services

Link to Strategic Priorities

- Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure which meets current and future needs of the municipality and its citizens.
- Create a safe, friendly and inclusive community which encourages healthy, active living for people of all ages and abilities.
- Provide a fiscal stewardship and value for tax dollars to ensure long-term financial health to the municipality.
- Manage responsible and viable growth while preserving and enhancing the unique rural and small town character of the community.
- Improve the experiences of individuals, as both citizens and customers, in their interactions with the Town of Essex.
- Improve the Town's capacity to meet the ongoing and future service needs of its citizens while ensuring the corporation is resilient in the face of unanticipated changes or disruptions.

Report Approval Details


Document Title:	County Road 50 West Paved Shoulders - Federal Active Transportation Fund .docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Mar 15, 2022

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Rita Jabbour, Manager, Planning Services - Mar 15, 2022 - 2:40 PM

No Signature - Task assigned to Lori Chadwick, Director, Development Services was completed by delegate Rita Jabbour, Manager, Planning Services

Lori Chadwick, Director, Development Services - Mar 15, 2022 - 3:11 PM



Doug Sweet, Chief Administrative Officer - Mar 15, 2022 - 3:15 PM